

GURU ARJUN'S MARTYRDOM RE-INTERPRETED

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INTRODUCTORY

The story of Guru Arjun's martyrdom has greatly suffered at the hands of Panjabi poet-historians who have allowed the fullest play to their imagination in its narration and have introduced a good deal of fiction to make it more appealing to the subjective minds of their readers. In the absence of contemporary records available to them and for want of objective discipline, they have, unwittingly done a great harm not only to the subject of their study but also to the authenticity of their works.

It was in the early twenties of the century that I came upon the reference to Guru Arjun in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the autobiographical memoirs of Emperor Jahangir, wherein he had stated that he had himself issued the orders of *yasa* and *siyasat*—torturous death—against Guru Arjun for his increasing religious popularity and proselytising activities amongst Hindus and Muslims and for his reported complicity in the rebellion of Prince Khusrau. In 1925 I discussed this subject

with Bhai Sewa Singh, editor, the *Khalsa Samachar*, Amritsar, and with Bhai Vir Singh, the well known scholar of Sikh history, particularly of the Guru period. Several other topics of this period also came under discussion in the light of Persian material. I had then to go back to Persia and the subject could not be pursued further. On my final return from that country in December 1930, I planned to settle down in Lahore at the suggestion of the late Bhagat Lakshman Singh and work systematically on the Persian sources of history, printed and manuscript, available in the collections of the Panjab Public and the Panjab University libraries. In the summer of 1931, I translated into Panjabi, for publication in the *Phulwari*, Lahore, (March-October 1931), extracts from a number of Persian works, such as the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin*, the *Khulasat-u-Tawarikh*, etc., etc.

In 1933 at Patna I read the letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the *Maktubat-i-Iman Rabbani Mujaddid Alf Sani* (Rose Press, Amritsar), in connection with his attitude towards the non-Muslims and found there, in volume III, letter no. 193,

which had a direct bearing on the martyrdom of Guru Arjun. I was very much surprised to find Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi expressing to Shaikh Farid Bukhari Murtza Khan, in a very pronounced manner, his jubilation at the execution of the saint of Goindwal. The letter, like many others in the collection, was not only overflowing with his religious intolerance for the Hindus and the Shia Muslims but it also revealed in clear language that his hidden hand must have played a prominent role in bringing about the execution of the Guru. Emperor Jahangir, as history knows him, was not much of a religious man himself and he had promised to the Mullahs, before his accession to the throne, to uphold the creed of Islam and to assume the role of its defender against the liberal and peace-with-all policy of Akbar the Great, only as a time-serving expediency. This is evident from his later life when he was firmly established on the throne. Therefore, it was clear beyond doubt that Jahangir's charge against Guru Arjun that Hindus and Muslims were embracing his faith in large numbers had been prompted by some external agency of fanatical Mullahs. And this could be no other than that of

the Mujaddid who worked upon the mind of Emperor Jahangir through his trusted friend and admirer Shaikh Farid Bukhari who had actually won for the Emperor his throne against his rebellious son Prince Khusrau and had received from His Imperial Majesty the title of Murtza Khan and a large landed jagir in the Panjab.

In the light of this revealing information the long yarn spun by poet-historian around Chandu Shah of Lahore lost all its meaning for me as an objective student of history and my earlier theory propounded in May 1931 that Guru Arjun was executed under the direct orders of the Emperor himself for his religious popularity and proselytization gained additional strength, making the Guru a real martyr at the altar of his faith instead of a victim of personal vendetta at the hands of an influential rich man.

On the invitation of Prof. Gurcharan Singh, M.A., P.E.S., with whom I have been occasionally sharing my views on historical subjects ever since I came to Patiala in 1949, the martyrdom of Guru Arjun became the topic of an interesting discussion at a meeting of the Guru Nanak Mandal, Patiala, on May 27, 1968, and then of the Panjab History Society on June 28, 1968, when it was presented in the form of the present paper.

Patiala,

Ganda Singh

May 15, 1969

درگو بند وال کہ برکنار دریاے جیہ واقع ست ہندوئے بود ارجن نام در لباس پیرے و شہنی
 چنانچہ بیارے از سادہ لوحان ہنود بلکہ نادان و سفیمان اسلام را عقید اطوار و اوضاع خود ساختہ
 کوس پیرے ولایت را بلند آوازہ گردانیدہ بود اور اگر و میگفتند و از اطراف جوانب گولان و
 گول پستان بدو رجوع آوردہ اعتقاد تمام با و اظہار میکردند از سہ چہار پشت او این دوکان را گرم میدا
 میدتا بخاطر میگذاشت کہ این دوکان باطل را بر طرت باید ساخت یا اورا در جرگہ اہل اسلام در باید آورد تا
 آنکہ درین ایام خسرو از ان راہ عبور مینمود درین مردک مجہول ارادہ کرد کہ ملازمت اورا در یاد در منبرے کہ
 جا و مقام او بود خسرو را نزول اقتاد آمدہ اورا دید و بعضی مقدمات فریافتہ باورسانید و بر پیشانی او آگشتہ
 از عرفان کہ بہ اصطلاح ہندوان قشقہ گویند کشید و آنرا شگون میداند چون این مقدمہ بمساع
 جاد و جلال میرسد و بطلان اورا بوجہ اکل میداستم امر کردم کہ اورا حاضر ساختند و ساکن و منازل و
 فرزندان اورا بمیر تقی خان عنایت نمودم و اسباب و اموال اورا بتبذیر ضبط در آورده فرمودم کہ اورا بہ سیات
 و بیاسار ساند .

و دو کس دیگر را کہ ماجور و انبانام داشتند در ظل حمایت دولت خان خواجہ میرزا بہرام ظلم و تعدی زندگانی
 میکردند و درین چہہ و زکیہ خسرو را ہوا را قبل داشت دست انداز میا و بے اندامی ہما نمودہ بود و فرمودم کہ
 راجہ را بدار کشیدہ از انبا کہ پیرہ دانی مشہور بود جریمہ گرفتند مجلایک لک و پانزدہ ہزار روپہ از وصول رسید
 آن مبلغ را فرمودم کہ بہ غلو و خانہ ہا و مہاروت تہرات صرف نمایند *

ماخوذ از توڑک جہانگیری صفحہ ۳۵
 مطبوعہ نو لکھنؤ پریس لکھنؤ

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THE MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJUN

Emperor Jahangir, under whose orders Guru Arjun was arrested and executed in 1606, should, historically speaking, be taken as the best and the most reliable authority on the martyrdom of the Guru. He was the chief prosecuting authority to exhibit the criminal charge against him as well as the final judge in the case to pass the sentence of death on him. And fortunately for history, we have both, the Emperor's charges and his sentence, available to us in his own words as recorded by him in his autobiography, the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri. The *Tuzuk* has been translated into English and Urdu and is readily available to the scholars of history. According to Jahangir :

“There lived at Goindwal on the bank of the river Biah (Beas) a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of a Pir and Shaikh, so much so that he had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims. and he had noised himself about as a religious and wordly

leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions, fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam.

“At last during the days when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow made up his mind to see him and conveyed preconceived things to him and made on his forehead a fingermark in saffron which in Hindu terminology is called qashqa (teeka) and is considered propitious. When this came to the ears of Our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence and, having handed over his houses, dwelling places, and children to Murtza Khan [Shaikh Farid Bukhari] and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.”

In his above statement, the Emperor has levelled two charges against Guru Arjun :

(i) The popularity of the religious teach-

ings and of the ways of life of the Guru amongst the Hindus and Muslims who looked upon him as a religious leader.

This had so upset and irritated Jahangir as to use very undignified language for the Guru and his followers, whom he calls simpletons, fools and stupids.

- (ii) The visit of the Guru to the rebel prince Khusrau whom he is said to have blessed with a saffron mark on his forehead.

The first charge may be accepted as correct. It is an undeniable historical fact that Guru Arjun was the acknowledged religious head of a new social order in the country aiming at a unified, classless and casteless society recognizing no distinctions between man and man—sons of the same father God—and between the high and the low or the rich and the poor. He was the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, the fourth in succession to Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, which welcomed to its proselytizing creed men and women without any distinction of race and religion. It knew no geographical and political barriers in accepting people into its embrace. To it all mankind was one and there were no chosen people and no discarded heathens or infidels.

This all was considered to be not in accordance with the accepted creed of the then rulers of the country who happened to be Muslims by faith, with Jahangir as the Emperor of India.

It is true, as history knows it, that Emperor Jahangir was not a puritan representative of the Islamic faith. Far from it. At times leaning towards Christianity, at others towards Hinduism, he was a man of confused religious views with no fixed moral scruples, a debauchee, always soaked in wine. Some time before and after his accession to the Mughal throne, he had perforce, of political necessity, to assume the character of the defender of the Muslim faith and play the role of a puritan. This was in keeping with his promise to an influential section of the fanatical Muslims, the Naqshbandi revivalists, headed in the Punjab by Shaihk Ahmad Sirhindi *Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-sani*, a disciple of Khwaja Baqi Billa, to whose devoted advocate Shaikh Farid Bukhari, later on entitled *Nawab Murtza Khan*, he owed his throne and the suppression of his heretic son Khusrau's rebellion which threatened to deprive him of his crown and kingdom.

For some time past, the puritan Muslims

had been feeling disturbed and agitated over the religious policies of Emperor Akbar whose toleration and liberality towards non-Sunni Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Sikhs, and the introduction of Divine Monotheism, the *Din-i-Illahi*, were interpreted as anti-Muslim and derogatory to Islam. Of all the Muslim divines of the period the Mujaddid was the bitterest against the non-Muslims for whose public humiliation and wholesale destruction he incited the leading Muslims in authority. According to calculated plans, the revivalists approached the chief pillars of the Mughal empire to support the successor of Emperor Akbar on the condition that there was a complete change in the imperial policy towards the non-Muslims and that the Islamic laws would be rigidly upheld and applied according to the Mujaddid's interpretation. Shaikh Farid Bukhari was one of the staunchest advocates of the revivalist movement and was a confidant and a supporter of the claims of the heir-apparent Prince Salim (later, Jahangir) to the Imperial throne.

In his impatience to be crowned, Prince Salim was suspected in 1591 of having caused poison to be administered to his father. "It is

impossible to say," writes Vincent Smith in his Akbar the Great Mughal, p. 301, "whether or not the suspicion was then justified; but it is certain that in 1600 Salim had become utterly weary of waiting for the long deferred and ardently desired succession. The prince, who was then thirtyone years of age, felt aggrieved, because the reign of his father had already lasted more than forty years, and Akbar's constitution seemed to postpone indefinitely the close of his life. Salim, therefore, following many evil precedents in Asiatic history resolved to anticipate the course of nature and occupy the imperial throne by force, whatever might be the consequences to his father."

He burst out into open rebellion against Emperor Akbar, assumed the royal title in 1601 and had Shaikh (Abul Fazl,) the dearest friend and the supporter of His Majesty, murdered in August 1602. A reconciliation was, however, effected through the paternal magnanimity of the Emperor who publicly recognized Prince Salim as his heir to the throne. Rumours and reports, however, continued to be circulated that, in reality, Akbar approved the nomination of his

grandson Khusrau, as his heir to the throne, and desired to be succeeded by him rather by his rebellious and intemperate son.

This set in motion intrigues and counter-intrigues with frantic efforts for winning support for the contesting parties—Prince Salim and his son Khusrau. The proposal of the Khan-i-Azam Aziz Koka and Raja Man Singh to exclude Prince Salim as unworthy in favour of his son was stoutly opposed by a number of nobles. This afforded a very favourable opportunity to the adherents of the puritan revivalists to exact from Prince Salim as a price for their support to his claims to the imperial throne two solemn oaths binding him in the first place to defend the Islamic religion against non-Muslim heathenism, and in the second place to wreak no vengeance upon those who had at any time in the past espoused the cause of Khusrau. Salim gladly accepted both the conditions and took the required oaths. ([Smith] Akbar, 301-03, 311, 316, 321-23; Muhammad Farman, Hayat-i-Mujaddid (Ikram, Rud-i-Kausar quoted) 28, 47, 49, 55-7, 69; Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, 51, 61-2.] This was a great achievement of the Mujaddidites who, in spite of

all his un-Islamic conduct in the past, acclaimed Prince Salim as Badshah-i-Islam after his father's death. To quote the Mujaddid himself as he wrote to Shaikh Bukhari :

امروز که نوید زوال مانع دولت اسلام و بشارت جلوس پادشاه
اسلام بگوش خاص و عام رسیده اهل اسلام برخود لازم دانستند که
مردم معاون پادشاه باشند و بر ترویج شریعت و تقویت ملت دلات
نمایند

“Today when the news of the death of the denier of the superiority of Islam and of the joyful accession of the King of Islam was heard by people, the followers of Islam considered it obligatory on their part to extend their support to the king and to work and guide for the propagation of the holy law of Islam and for the reinforcement of the Religion [*Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*, Vol. 1, part ii. p. 22, letter 47].

Shaikh Farid Bukhari had also secured the active co-operation of the Sayyids of Barha who were well known for their religious zeal and martial valour [Smith, 322-23; Beni Prasad, 62]. The combination of the Barha fraternity with

Shaikh Farid greatly strengthened the side of Prince Salim whose solemn oaths to act as the defender of the creed of Islam also won over to his side many another half-hearted and vacillating noble. This made him invincible against his son's party which after the death of Akbar on October 17, 1605, and the accession of Salim as the new Emperor Jahangir, a week later on the 24th, was left with no adherents. With a clear stroke of statesmanship, the new Emperor effected reconciliation with Raja Man Singh and dismissed him in all honour to his Government in Bengal. Khusrau also was received with warmest affection with a grant of a lakh of rupees for the renovation of a mansion allotted to him for residence in the fort of Agra.

But the ambitious and impatient spirit of Khusrau felt restless in a sort of semi-confinement in the Agra fort and, to try his luck once again, he escaped on April 6, 1606, and hurried towards the Punjab evidently in the hope of gaining adherents in the north-west and leading a successful rebellion against his father. Thither he was closely pursued by Shaikh Farid Bukhari, followed at a short distance by the Emperor himself. The Shaikh followed the same route as was followed

by Khusrau, crossing the river Beas at Goindwal, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the rebel prince near Bharowal. In his flight towards Kabul, Khusrau was captured on April 27, while trying to cross the river Chenab, and was brought to Lahore, handcuffed and enchained, to be ordered into confinement by Emperor Jahangir on the first of May (Muharram 3, 1015 A.H.).

For over a week, April 28 to May 7, the Emperor stayed on in the garden of Kamran outside the town of Lahore waiting for the auspicious hour to enter the fort (on Muharrum 9, May 7, 1606).

The Emperor was now at perfect ease to attend to other official business of the empire including the despatch of reinforcements to Shah Beg Khan, Governor of Qandahar, against the threatened attack by Hussain Khan of Herat. He rewarded a number of his nobles for their meritorious services and granted to them high ranks and cash awards. Pleased with the prediction of Shaikh Hussain Jami, he ordered the sum of twenty lakh dams, equivalent to thirty-four thousand rupees, to be paid to him for his maintenance and of his *khanqah* and the *darveshes* living

there. On the 22nd of Muharram, May 20, he raised the *mansab* of Abdullah Khan and granted an advance of two lakhs of rupees for the Ahdis. Rupees six thousand were this day paid to Qasim Beg Khan, son-in-law of Badshah Beg Khan, and three thousand to Sayyid Bahadur Khan. The Emperor also now decided to stay on at Lahore to ward off the danger to Qandahar and to pay a visit to Kabul. He had also in the meantime called from Agra his son Parwez and also his own mother and the ladies of his harem.

On or about the 23rd of May, a report was poured into the ears of Emperor Jahangir that during the short halt of Khusrau at Goindwal, on the right bank of river Beas, the Sikh Guru Arjun had gone to see the prince and had conveyed to him some preconceived things and had also blessed him with a saffron mark on his forehead. Hearing this, the Emperor ordered the Guru to be brought into his presence, confiscated his property and sentenced him to a torturous death ||
— Yasa-o-Siyasat.

This was practically a month after the Guru was alleged to have blessed the prince and some twenty-seven days after the Emperor himself had

crossed the Beas at that very place. This makes the whole thing a puzzle and throws a very serious doubt on the genuineness and authenticity of the report. The fact that for twenty-seven days, from April 26, when the emperor appears to have crossed the Beas at Goindwal and was encamped at Jhabal (transliterated as Jaipal by later copyists) and May 22, mentioned above, there is no reference whatsoever in the Tuzuk in any way involving Guru Arjun in the affairs of Prince Khusrau or of any of his accomplices. If the Guru had met and blessed Khusrau at Goindwal, it would certainly have been reported to the Emperor on the spot or in its immediate neighbourhood where it could have been easily verified and authenticated by eye-witnesses and the Guru would have been arrested and carried a prisoner with him to Lahore. But, in fact, nothing came to the ears of His Majesty for as long as a month.

Now about the details of the report as recorded by Jahangir in the Tuzuk. The Guru was not a politician to be in any way interested in the rebellion of Prince Khusrau against his father Jahangir who had been on the

throne hardly for six months, nor had the Prince met the Guru after the accession of his father to prompt the Guru to have any preconceived things to be conveyed to him.

As for the *qashqa* or *teeka* mark of saffron by the Guru on the forehead of the Prince, it is, on the face of it, a pure and simple concoction of some conspirator's fertile imagination to exploit the Emperor's emotions against the Guru. Never in the whole history of the Sikh Gurus, there has been any occasion for any Guru to anoint anyone, Sikh or a non-Sikh, with a *teeka*. Even the succeeding Guru was not *teeka'd* by any Guru himself. The *teeka* or *tilak* ceremony of the succeeding Guru was always performed by a leading Sikh. In the case of Gurus Angad to Guru Hargobind, including Guru Arjun himself, the ceremony was performed by Bhai Buddha, a venerable old Sikh coming from the days of Guru Nanak. And the same practice was followed up to the time of Guru Gobind Singh, tenth and the last Guru. (not last Guru).

Guru Arjun was a successor of Guru Nanak and the head of the Sikh religion. He could not have departed from and gone against the accepted

practice of the religion. The great Emperor Akbar had met the third Guru Amardas and had in recognition of his spiritual position, bestowed upon his daughter the piece of land where the city of Amritsar was later founded by Guru Ramdas. The Emperor had met Guru Arjun himself also and had, evidently on his suggestion, remitted 10 to 12% of the excessive revenue of the Punjab as demanded by changed circumstances. The Gurus had then, in both cases, valid reasons to thank and bless the Emperor, but at no time was a saffron *tilak* mark made on his forehead by any of them as a mark of his blessings or gratitude.

According to the *Mehma Parkash* of Sarup Das Bhalla of Goindwal, the Guru took pity upon the Prince in misery and provided him with food, evidently, from the Guru's *Langar*, or free kitchen, open to all wayfarers [*Sakhi* No. 143, 1-4]. He makes no mention of any *teeka* or blessings or any financial help.

Thus the allegation of the political complicity and of blessing the rebellious Prince Khusrau levelled against Guru Arjun falls flat as historically unsound and may be summarily dismissed as

unacceptable by the objective students of history. It had evidently been cooked up by some interested persons, with or without a casual or a meaningful hint falling from the Emperor's lips about his attitude towards Guru Arjun, to add fuel to the fire of the Emperor's wrath against the Guru or to provide His Majesty with an opportunity to take his long looked for action against him, whose religious preachings and increasing influence amongst the Hindus and the Muslims had already for sometime past incensed his mind. And, according to his own statement. Jahangir was looking for an opportunity either to put an end to Guru Arjun's preachings or to convert him to Islam. He, therefore, made no enquiry into the genuineness of the charges levelled against the Guru. In fact, he did not feel the necessity of it. He himself became a prosecution witness as well saying, 'I fully knew his heresies—*butlan-i-oraba-wajah-i-akmal midanistam*' [Tuzuk].

Immediately after the charges came to his ears, he ordered the Guru's arrest and the confiscation of his property and passed the sentence of torturous death against him. This leaves no doubt whatever that it was the Guru's religious

preachings, or the so-called heresies, or butlan, as the Emperor calls them, that were wholly responsible for the Emperor's sentence against him. The political allegations were only used as a handy pretext and recorded as a camouflaging justification for his drastic action against a popular religious leader, either to satisfy his own guilty conscience or to throw his future non-Muslim critics off the track of truth. As for the Muslims, he knew that the vocal puritan section of them would feel satisfied with his action as it was in keeping with his promise to act as a defender of the Islamic faith as mentioned earlier.

There is yet another point in dispute. The Emperor's account in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* would make us believe that Guru Arjun was living at Goindwal when Prince Khusrav and the Emperor crossed the river Beas at that ferry and that it was from there that the Guru was arrested and taken to Lahore. Macauliff's *Sikh Religion*, iii 85, evidently based on Sarup Das Bhalla's *Mehma Parkash* (Sakhi No. 143, 2-3)¹ and Santokh

¹ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤਰਨ ਤਾਰਨ ਪਹ ਗਏ ।

ਕੇਤਕ ਦਿਨ ਤਹਾਂ ਬੀਤਤ ਭਏ ।

ਤਹਾ ਭਾਗਾ ਆਇਆ ਇਕ ਸ਼ਹਜ਼ਾਦਾ । (ਬਾਕੀ ਅਗਲੇ ਪੰਨੇ ਤੇ ਦੇਖੋ)

Singh's *Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, Ras 4, 29, page 2342, however, tells us that the Guru was then at Tarn Taran and that Khusrau had met him there. Beni Prasad in his *History of Jahangir*, p. 122, also confirms this. This is, however, a minor point in the story, though not an entirely negligible one.

Once the Emperor had issued the orders of torturous death against the Guru, he took no notice of the details and left the whole thing into the hands of Shaikh Farid Bukhari, his favourite general and the chief man responsible for the suppression of his son's rebellion. The Shaikh was honoured with the title of Murtza Khan and the village of Bharowal, where Khusrau was defeated by him, was granted to him in *Jagir*.

It was during the captivity of Guru Arjun at Lahore, May 24-30, that, according to Jesuit records, "Certain gentiles [heathens or Hindus] interceded on behalf of their holy man and in the

ਕਛੁ ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਸੋ ਭਇਆ ਬਿਬਾਦਾ ॥ ੨ ॥ (ਪਿਛਲੇ ਪੰਨੇ ਦਾ ਬਾਕੀ)

ਉਹਾ ਆਣ ਡੇਰਾ ਤਿਨ ਲੀਨਾ ।

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੋ ਭੇਟਾ ਤਿਨ ਕੀਨਾ ।

ਸੋ ਬਡਾ ਦੁਖੀ ਤਾ ਪਰ ਭਈ ਆਫਤ ।

ਦੇਖ ਦਿਆਲ ਗੁਰ ਕਰੀ ਜ਼ਿਆਫਤ ॥ ੩ ॥

end he was allowed to purchase his freedom for a hundred thousand crusados [about two lakhs of rupees] for which a wealthy gentile became his surety.... But neither the Guru nor those about him could meet the demands of his tormentor ; at last the poor man died overcome by the miseries heaped upon him.”...[Jahangir and the Jesuits, p. 12] The wealthy gentile, referred to above, was presumably Chandu Shah of the Sikh tradition.

The author of the Dabistan-i-mazahib says that “when His Majesty the late Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir, after the arrest of Khusrau, arrested and fined Guru Arjun Mall for the reason that he had prayed for the welfare of Prince Khusrau, the late Emperor’s son who had rebelled against his father, they demanded an enormous sum from him (Guru Arjun). The Guru was unable to pay. Having imprisoned him they kept him in the sandy desert of Lahore. From the heat of the sun, the severity of the summer and the tortures of the bailiffs, he gave his life.”

Both the above authorities make a mention of fine levied against the Guru. But their information, apparently, is based on hearsay on what was circulated by the official sources or interested

parties to absolve the reigning Emperor of wanton tyranny in the eyes of the public. The Emperor in his sentence makes no mention of the fine whatever. And in the face of his clear sentence of a torturous death, it is extremely difficult to give credence to the story of the fine and of its non-payment being the main cause of the Guru's persecution. Could any one dare disobey the order of an autocrat despot whose word was law ? At best Chandu Shah may be said to have offered to stand a surety for the Guru if the Emperor agreed to commute the death sentence into that of a heavy fine. But as this could not come about or the Guru refused to accept it, the imperial bailiffs proceeded with the execution of the original orders of *Yasa* and *Siyasat* to torture him to death, by seating him in a caldron of boiling water and pouring burning sand on his naked body. The most painful torture that could be inflicted on a blistered body was to dip it in cold water. And that is what they did. The river Ravi was then flowing nearby and they gave him a dip therein. This brought an end to his life. His physical frame succumbed to the final torture and Guru Arjun became the first martyr at the altar of his faith. His was a great soul, no doubt,

but it is equally true that his body, like that of the other mortals, was made of the five elements of nature which returned to their original source in the usual course.

The story that the Guru was subjected to all sorts of inhuman tortures by Chandu Shah to wreak his vengeance upon the Guru for his having refused his daughter's hand for his (Guru's) son Hargobind or to coerce him to accept it even at that stage, is, without doubt, nothing but a baseless invention of the fanciful mind of some poet fed upon the imaginary stories of ancient Indian literature. Granting that there is some truth in the story, it cannot be easily accepted that Emperor Jahangir or Murtza Khan Shaikh Farid Bukhari, the defenders of the Islamic faith, handed over Guru Arjun, a *Kafir* accused of religious heresies and treasonable complicity in a rebellion against the Emperor, to a Hindu *Kafir* (who might have set him free), in the face of the Emperor's clear orders to put him to a torturous death, *Yasa-o-siyasat*. And this would reduce the historical martyrdom to a personal vendetta which, evidently, it was not, as we know it from the evidence of the *Tuzuk*.

It may also be mentioned here incidently that the name of Chandu Shah is not to be found in the *Tuzuk* or any other contemporary or semi-contemporary works on the reign of Jahangir.

To say therefore that “at time Chandu Shah was the Emperor’s *Diwan* or Financial Minister [Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, iii. 70–73; Forster’s *Travels*, i.258; Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*,55] is not historically correct.

The last phase of the Guru’s death is described by Macauliffe, iii.98, on the basis of Bhai Santokh Singh’s *Gur-partap Suraj Granth* [*Ras 4 Ansu 37*] that after five days’ sufferings the Guru, when threatened to be sewed up alive in the fresh hide of a cow, “asked permission to bathe in the Ravi”. Thither he went full of blisters and had his final bath never to return alive. This would virtually amount to calculated suicide committed to escape the torture of being sewed up in the hide.

The fact, evidently, however, is that the Guru was taken to the river Ravi under an armed escort to meet the final torture to his blistered body through a dip in the icy cold water of the river. For this we have evidence of two early

historians of the Sikhs, Rattan Singh in the *Prachin Panth Parkash* and Sohan Lal Suri in the *Umdat-u-Twarikh*. Referring to the tyranny of the Mughal Empire against the Sikhs, Rattan Singh poses a question, the first line of which is very significant indeed for our purpose here :—

Kia Gur Arjun daryai na boryo

(ਕਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਅਰਜਨ ਦਰਿਆਇ ਨ ਬੋਰਯੋ)

[*Prachin Panth Parkash*, 534,
lines 17-8.]

Was not Guru Arjun thrown into the river ?
he asks.

This reveals to us in clear words that up to the middle of the nineteenth century, when Rattan Singh completed his work (1898 Bk., 1841 A.D.), it was a matter of common knowledge and belief among the Sikhs that Guru Arjun was at last thrown into the river Ravi at Lahore. This is confirmed by Sohan Lal, a contemporary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in his *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, the first volume of which, wherein we find the reference to Guru Arjun's martyrdom, is based on the material left by his father and grandfather, Ganpat Rai and Hakumat Rai. There the

author tells us that—

بعد از ظهور بعضی مقدمات ناملائم ذاتِ عالی را در بهر روی انداختند

—Having subjected him to a number of hardships, they threw the saint (Guru Arjun) into the river Ravi.

Kesar Singh in his *Bansavali Nama* (completed in 1826 Bk., 1769 A.D.) also supports this statement saying : ਸੋ ਬਧੇ ਹੀ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨਦੀ ਰੁੜ੍ਹਾਏ— [*Charan* v, 141], that is, tied up he was thrown in the river.

The evidence of these independent authorities is conclusive enough to demolish the fictional theory that the Guru went to the river for a bath on his own accord. With his body full of blisters and extremely weakened by the tortures, it is unthinkable that he had gone to the river for a cold bath at a time when he was unable to walk properly.

All things considered, therefore, we are left with the only conclusion that Guru Arjun was subjected to various tortures in the execution of Emperor Jahangir's orders to put him to death

according to *Yasa* and *Siyasat* and that, finally, his blistered body was dipped, if, actually, not thrown or drowned, in the cold water of river Ravi. This brought an end to his life.

Bhai Gurdas, a contemporary and a close relative, an uncle of the Guru on the mother's side, has referred in his *Varan* to the Guru's last moments as most peaceful. The night before his death was very painful, he says, but the 'Guru endured all this with a smiling face in perfect calmness and resignation to His Divine Will, with the Master's words on his lips and preaching the Lord's message to those around him [*Var.* xxiv-23].

While a world was plunged into sorrow and grief over the death of Guru Arjun, who was not only the leader of Sikh religion, holding a position "equivalent to that of Pope amongst the Christians", to use the words of the Rev. Fr. Fernao Guerreiro, but was also a saint and a scholar who had given to the world a scripture of the highest order, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi *Mujaddid Alfi-Sani*, the leader of the Muslim Naqshbandi revivalists in the Punjab, felt jubliant over it. According to him it was a matter of great

satisfaction that an acknowledged leader of the non-Muslim infidels, in an area of his own influence, had been finally removed from the scene of his activities. And he expressed his exultancy to no less a person than Nawab *Murtza Khan* Shaikh Farid Bukhari, the favourite confidant and chief adviser of Emperor Jahangir in winning over the leading Muslim nobles to take his side in the contest for the throne by exacting from him (the Emperor) the promise on oath that in case of his success he would act as defender of the Islamic faith which, according to Jahangir himself, was in danger at the hands of Guru Arjun. Murtza Khan, as we have already mentioned, was a devoted disciple of the great *Mujaddid* and it was through him that the revivalists worked upon the mind of Emperor Jahangir to reverse the policy of religious tolerance towards the non-Muslims followed by his father Akbar, the Great. The actual words of Shaikh Ahmad written with reference to Guru Arjun in the course of his letter No. 193 in part III of Vol. I of the *Mutaubat-i-Imam Rabbani Hazrat Mujjaddid-Alf-i-Sani* are.

درس وقت کشتن کافر یعنی گوئید وال بسیار خوب واقع شد و
 باعث شکست عظیم بر نبود مردود گشت - بهر نیت که گشته باشند
 و بهر غرض که هلاک کرده خواری کفار خود نقد وقت اهل اسلام است -
 این مقیر پیش از آن که این کافر را بکشند در خواب دیده بود که بادشاه
 دقت کله سر شرکت را شکسته است و الحق که آن بگریس اهل
 شرک بود و امام اهل کفر... عزت اسلام و اهل آن در خواری کفر و
 اهل کفر است - مقصود از انهد جزیره خواری کفار است و اله نیت ایشان...
 از خرویات دین است مکتوبات امام ربانی حضرت محمد بن عثمان
 معصوم سوئم - دفتر اول مکتوب ۱۹۳۸

Translated into English they would read as :

The execution of the accursed *Kafir* of Goindwal at this time is a very good achievement indeed and has become the cause of a great defeat of the hateful Hindus. With whatever intention they are killed and with whatever objective they are destroyed, it is a meritorious act for the Muslims. Before this *Kafir* was killed, I had seen in a dream that the Emperor of the day had destroyed the

crown of the head of *Shirk* or infidelity. It is true that this infidel was the chief of the infidels and a leader of the *Kafirs*. .. The object of levying *Jeziya* on them is to humiliate and insult the *Kafirs*, and *jihad* against them and hostility towards them are the necessities of the Muhammadan faith.

[*Maktubat*, I-iii, letter No. 193, pp. 95-6.]

The *Mujaddid* uses still stronger language against the non-Muslims in his letter No. 163, *Maktubat*, I-iii, pp. 50-53), wherein he urges upon Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan to humiliate and insult the *Kafirs* in every possible way, to keep them at a distance like dogs, and to destroy them wholesale, if possible.

All this speaks volumes for the attitude of the leader of the Muslim Revivalist movement in the Panjab, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi *Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Sani*, towards the Sikh Guru Arjun who, according to him, was the Chief of the infidels *Reis-iahl-i-shirk* and a leader of the *Kafirs-Imam-i-ahl-kufr* whose humiliation and destruction he repeatedly urges upon his devoted follower Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan as the necessities of the Muhammadan faith-*Jehad bil-kuffar wa ghilzat bar ishan az zaruriyat-i-din ast*.

It was under the influence and advice of this Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan, the devoted follower and the advocate of the fanatical and the intolerant revivalist, the *Mujaddid* of Sirhind, that Emperor Jahangir had pledged to act as the defender of Islam against the religious activities of the non-Muslims of the country. It was during the first year of his reign and of his solemn promise that he had to issue his commands in the case of Guru Arjun. This was practically the first test case for him to prove his *bona fides*. It was dangerous for him then not to act in accordance with the wishes of the revivalists whose chief advocate was his own chief supporter and adviser. To him, therefore, was Guru Arjun handed over by the Emperor for execution according to his ancestral Mongol law of *Yasa* and *Siyasat*, and upon him he bestowed the confiscated property of the Guru.

This also lends considerable support to the probability that, disappointed at the sluggishness of the Emperor to take any action of his own accord, for practically a month after his crossing the Beas at Goindwal, against the leader of the Sikh centre of non-Muslim preachings at Goindwal Tarn Taran, Amritsar, etc., in the heart of

the Punjab, the complaint against the Guru might as well have been made, directly or indirectly, by some agent of the *Mujaddid* or of Shaikh Farid Bukhari to implicate the Guru in the rebellion of Khusrau to secure from the Emperor orders for his arrest and execution soon after the execution of Hussain Beg Badakhshi, Abdur Rahim and the other accomplices of Prince Khusrau.

As we have seen above, Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan was a willing agent and a voluntary exponent of the revivalists as also a loyal adherent of the Emperor. And the both at this time stood for the humiliation of the non-Muslims—the revivalists from religious conviction and the Emperor from political expediency for which he had, of necessity, assumed the role of the defender of the faith. The Shaikh, therefore, naturally had to obey the royal orders regarding Guru Arjun both in letter and spirit. One cannot, under the circumstances, be easily persuaded to believe that he would hand over Guru Arjun to a *Kafir*, as Chandu Shah was according to the revivalists, giving him option to commute the Emperor's sentence of death against him or to release him on the acceptance of certain conditions to suit the personal demands of the

Kafir himself. It is apparent, therefore, that much of the Chandu-story was given currency to in those very days to shift the responsibility of the tortures inflicted on the Guru from the Mughal officials to the *Kafirs*.

The reasons of the Mujaddid being particularly enemical towards Guru Arjun are not far to seek. The Mujaddid was a zealous preacher of the puritanic Islam and felt called upon to see the supermacy and the superiority of the Islamic faith of the holy prophet of Mecca established in the Mughal Empire, of which the rulers were the Muslims. But he could not see his dream materialise in the face of the vast population professing non-Muslim faiths. In the Panjab, the non-Muslims were either the declared followers of the Sikh faith or were being increasingly attracted towards it through the life and preachings of Guru Arjun, as the author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* also tells us :

‘In short, during the time of each *Mahal* or Guru, the Sikhs increased in number till in the reign of Guru Arjun Mall they became numerous, and there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found. In the time of *Mahals*

before the fifth Guru, no offerings were collected from the Sikhs. Whatever was presented by the Sikhs themselves was accepted. During his time, Arjun Mall deputed one person to the Sikhs of every city so that he may collect tribute and offerings from them. [This deputy or agent was called *masand*.]”

“People began to become Sikhs of the Guru through the medium of *masands*. The chief masands, through whom large numbers became Sikhs of the Guru, appointed deputies on their own behalf so that in every place and *mahal*, people having become associates of the Masands through the Masands’ agent, became Sikhs of the Guru.”

And, according to Emperor Jahangir, Guru Arjun “had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish Muslims, and he had noised himself about as a religious and wordly leader. They called him *Guru* and from all directions fools and fool worshippers were attracted towards him, and expressed full faith in him.”

Emperor Akbar had made grants of land to the Guru’s house during the time of Guru Amar

Das, and had admired the Sikh teachings as contained in the Sikh scripture and had accepted Guru Arjun's recommendations on behalf of the distressful people for the reduction of land revenue up to 10 and 12 per cent. The ever-increasing followers of the Sikh faith from among the Hindus and Muslims and the Guru's popularity among the people at large were, evidently, narrowing the field from where the Mujaddid himself had to raise his crop of converts. This was a positive danger to his Islamizing plans and he could, naturally, not tolerate the person who was responsible for it. To Shaikh Ahmad, the invitation extended by Guru Arjun to the Sufi Saint Hazrat Mian Mir to lay the foundation stone at Amritsar of the holiest of the holy temple of the Sikhs, whom he looked upon as *Kafirs*, must have come as great shock and added to his irritation against the Guru as well as the venerable saint of Lahore.

He had evidently some such instances of the all-embracing catholicity and exceptional broad-mindedness of Guru Arjun and his increasing popularity among the Muslims, both of the ruling and saintly classes, when he wrote to Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan his letters No. 163 and 165 and condemned as un-Islamic any goodwill to-

wards the religion of the non-Muslims or inclination to show any regard or favour to them in any way whatsoever. The life and philosophy of 'peace-with-all' was highly repugnant to the Mujaddid and it was he who may be said to have been mainly responsible for the introduction of communal virus into the body politic of the country during his time (1563 to 1624), with occasional eruptions up to the middle of the eighteenth century. And he was not the person to have missed the favourable opportunity that presented itself to him under the circumstances changed with the death of Akbar and the accession of Jahangir, and he must have readily availed himself of it to the work the ruin of Guru Arjun directly or indirectly either through Shaikh Farid Murtza Khan or through some other agency. No one else in the country was as much interested in the removal of Guru Arjun from the field of his religious preachings as the Mujaddid was, and no one else had then as much influence in the imperial court as he had, through Shaikh Farid, to carry out his wishes. And when Guru Arjun was executed he gloated over it as *bislar khub waqia* 'an; excellent event', a very great achievement.

In the light of the contemporary historical evidence from direct and original sources mentioned above there is only one irresistible conclusion we can come to that Guru Arjun was arrested and executed for his religious preachings under the orders of Emperor Jahangir issued during the first year of his reign when, of political necessity, he had, to humour the revivalist Muhammadans, to act as defender of the Islamic faith. The case of Guru Arjun happened to be the first important one reported to him for his decision. It was to him a test case to prove the *bona fides* of his promise to act as a defender of Islam and a saviour of the Muslims from the influences of non-Muslims. Jahangir, therefore, ordered Guru Arjun to be put to death, and in justification thereof he accused him of captivating the hearts of many Hindus and Muslims who 'called him Guru... and expressed full faith in him.'

It may also be stated here that this phase of fanaticism in the life of Jahangir in the beginning of his reign did not demonstrate itself against Guru Arjun alone. In fact, it began with the conversion of a young Hindu who had for certain reasons been previously circumcised. Referring to this, Jahangir one evening said "that once he had

been circumcised he was no longer a gentile and that he ought to take another law.” And, when he became a Muslim, he “was paraded through the city on an elephant with great state and amid much rejoicing to the great contentment of the Moors (Muslims) and the mortification of the gentiles” [*Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 15].

The change in the attitude of Jahangir was more marked towards the Christians than others. The Jesuite Fathers had looked upon him, almost as a Christian and ‘believed that his accession would lead many to embrace the Christian faith’. ‘But these hopes,’ according to Father Xavier’s letter of September 25, 1606, to the Provincial of Goa (*Relations* of father Fernao Guerreiro, *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, xiii, 3) ‘were disappointed; for he had sworn an oath to the Moors (Muslims) to uphold the law of Mafamede (Muhammad), and being anxious at the commencement of his reign to secure their goodwill, he gave orders for the cleaning of mosques, restored the fasts (*Ramazan*) in the royal palace and the Prayers of the Moors. Of the Fathers he took no more notice than if he had never seen them before.’

The story of how two young Armenian Christian children, aged 14 and 10 years, were ordered by Jahangir to be flogged in his own presence with a whip, used for scourging criminals, to coerce them to repeat the *Kalima* as a confession of the acceptance of the faith of Islam, how cruelly Jahangir 'ordered them to be held hand and foot and despite their protestations and cries had them circumcised then and there, in his own presence', and how mercilessly the bleeding children were whipped again and again, under his orders and in his very presence, to make them repeat the words of the *Kalima* after their forcible circumcision, is too painful and heart-rending to be narrated here. The inquisitive reader is referred to pp. 16-23 of the *Jahangir and the Jesuits* (The Broadway Travellers series), London, 1930.

The above instances have been quoted as an illustration of the temporary change in the religious attitude and policy of Jahangir in the beginning of his reign and of the inhuman cruelty to which he could then sink at the instigation of the orthodox Mullahs. The sentence of a torturous death passed against Guru Arjun in the first year of his reign was, therefore, in keeping with his then changed religious policy and mental attitude to which wild cruelty was not a thing unknown.

How the 'fine' theory came to be introduced into the story of Guru Arjun's martyrdom may also be explained here. The clue to the explanation is provided by Emperor Jahangir's *Tuzuk* itself. After having recorded his account of the causes that led to his orders for the execution of the Guru he proceeds further to narrate other events. The next event recorded by him is about two other persons Raju and Amba who under the protection of *Khwaja-sera* Daulat Khan had terrorised the people during the insurrection of Prince Khusrau in the neighbourhood of Lahore. To quote the Emperor himself :

Two other persons named Raju and Amba had under the protection of *Khwaja-sera* Daulat Khan committed oppression and tyrannies over the people during the few days when Khusrau was moving towards Lahore. I ordered that Raju be hanged and Amba, who was known to be a rich man, be fined. One *lakh* and fifteen thousand rupees were received from him. About this amount I ordered that it might be spent on gun-powder and for charitable purposes.

Both the orders of the Emperor, the first one about Guru Arjun and the second one about Raju

and Amba, whom he calls *two other persons* — *do kas digar* — , had evidently been issued and implemented almost at the same time, or without much difference in time, and they are recorded in his *Tuzuk* one after the other in chronological order. Beyond this, as the words *do kas digar* clearly suggest, the two events and orders had no historical relationship. There is nothing on record to show that Raju and Amba were in any way connected with Guru Arjun. No history of the Sikhs makes any mention of them in any connection whatsoever. Nor had Daulat Khan *Khwaja-sera*, their patron and protector, had anything to do with Guru Arjun or his followers. Simply because Raju was hanged and Amba was heavily fined in those very days when Guru Arjun was done to death, people in the streets of Lahore, either in ignorance or through some one's wilful circulation, connected the two events together and bracketed the 'fine', actually levied upon Amba, along with the order of death passed against Guru Arjun. And this wrongful and unhistorical news came to be widely circulated in the ordinary way and as well reached the years of unsuspecting scholars who took it on its face value and accepted it as true. Not only the mid-seventeenth century author of the

Dabistan-i-Mazahib believed it but the Sikh writer of the *Mehma Prakash* in the second half of the eighteenth century also partially accepted and recorded it.

According to the *Mehma Prakash*, the imposition of fine was originally suggested by Chandu Shah, a Khatri of Lahore. He had been a servant, a *chakar*, of the Emperor and he made this suggestion to him when he reported to His Majesty the 'news' of Guru Arjun having entertained the rebellious prince for a night at Tarn Taran and helping him with some money (*Khazana*). He is said to have told the Emperor that Guru Arjun was being called *Jag-Guru* a world teacher, and that he had himself addressed (by his disciples) as *Sacha Padshah*, the True King, that he received plenty of money (as offerings) and that he was very proud of his riches (*bahut khazana tin ko awai... bada garur maya ka wa ko*).² Having thus excited the Emperor, for reasons unknown to history, Chandu suggested to him to impose upon the Guru a fine of two lakhs of rupees. But when

²ਬਹੁਤ ਖਜ਼ਾਨਾ ਤਿਨ ਕੋ ਆਵੈ...

ਬਡਾ ਗਰੂਰ ਮਾਯਾ ਕਾ ਵਾ ਕੋ

the Imperial *ahdi* sent out to bring the Guru to Lahore came and reported to the Emperor the arrival of Guru Arjun there, the Emperor “remained silent and said nothing good or bad.”³

Then follows more or less the usual story resulting in the Guru's death and his body being thrown into the river.

It may be mentioned here that beyond the suggestion of Chandu at the earliest stage of the report, before the arrest of the Guru and the despatch of the royal orderly for the purpose, there is no mention, even in the *Mehma Prakash*, of the Emperor having issued any order for the levy of a fine upon the Guru.

Thus, as a result of the confusion of circumstances and the events connected with the Emperor's orders for the execution of Guru Arjun, and of Raju, and for the fine imposed on Amba almost at the same time, has the ‘fine’ theory come to be introduced into story of the Guru.

³ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਲਹੌਰ ਸੋ ਆਏ ।

ਜਾਇ ਅਹਿਦੀ ਨੇ ਅਰਜ਼ ਕਰਾਏ ।

ਸੁਨ ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਚੁਪ ਹੋ ਰਹਾ ।

ਭਲੀ ਬੁਰੀ ਕੁਛ ਸੁਨਾ ਨ ਕਹਾ ॥ ੧੦ ॥

Guru Arjun being the most prominent and important of all those against whom Emperor Jahangir's orders of execution and persecution were then issued, all types of heavy punishments ordered to be inflicted on the victims of royal wrath came to be associated with the name of Guru Arjun and recorded by later writers, unwittingly doing incalculable harm to history.

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